# Joint ESM-EVBO meetings

ESC European Society of Cardiology

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**EDITORS' CORNER**

CARDIOVASCULAR RESEARCH Onlife

# Joint ESM-EVBO meetings: past, present, and future

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From April 15 to 18 of this year, we are pleased to host the third joint meeting of the European Society for Microcirculation (ESM)[1] and the European Vascular Biology Organization (EVBO)[2] in Maastricht (*Figure 1A*). The conference draws research scientists, investigators in basic and applied research, clinicians, post-doctoral fellows, and graduate students actively engaged in the growing fields of microcirculation and vascular biology. The conference objective is to advance research and education in the many areas of microcirculation and vascular biology.

## History of joint meetings

As the fields of expertise of the members of these two societies are linked and often overlapping, both boards conceived the idea of organizing a joint meeting. Clearly, there are many benefits for basic science societies to join forces related to scientific crosstalk to generate new ideas, link two networks as an opportunity for both young and established researchers, and be financially sustainable. Hence, the Maastricht meeting already represents the third joint meeting of these two societies. The first meeting was held in Pisa in 2015 and organized by Profs. Marco Rossi and Jozef Dulak. After a successful meeting with high-quality abstracts[3] and active scientific discussions, Prof. Beat Imhof took it upon himself to organize the second one in Geneva in 2017, together with local organizers Prof. Bochaton-Piallat, and Dr Kwak. This became a wonderful homage to his scientific work, and interesting data and 187 abstracts were presented.[4] Although the majority of delegates work in Europe, there was representation from North America, Australia, and Asia, as shown by an overview of the 28 different nationalities of delegates attending the previous conference in 2017 (*Figure 1B*). Prof. Beat Imhof first introduced the young investigator session, as a platform for recently established group leaders to show their excellent research. This was very well received, and offers an outstanding chance to young investigators, for whom it is imperative, yet challenging to ascertain invited lectures. We will continue this admirable idea also in Maastricht.

## This year's programme

The Dutch organizers, Dr Alfons (Boy) Houben (CARIM/MUMC+ Maastricht), Dr Judith Sluimer (CARIM/MUMC+ Maastricht), Prof. Jaap van Buul (Sanquin, VUMC, Amsterdam), Dr Ed Eringa (VUMC, Amsterdam), Dr Stephan Huveneers (AMC, Amsterdam), and Dr Guido Krenning (UMCG, Groningen) aimed to design a programme satisfying both basic and clinical scientists. As board members of the Dutch Endothelial cell Biology Society (DEBS), and Microcirculation & Vascular Biology MiVaB societies, they have organized joint meetings in The Netherlands since 2010 and will even officially join forces as the Netherlands Vascular Biology Organization (NeVBO). Hence, the team is suited to organize this joint meeting. With strong representation from the International Scientific Advisory Committee[5] and ESM and EVBO boards,[1,2] the Organizing Committee have developed an exciting programme which reflects the growing research areas of vascular cell biology, microcirculation and their related diseases, while also highlighting new technologies, such as single cell sequencing.[6]

The scientific programme revolves around the themes of the physiology and pathology of small and large blood vessels. Main and concurrent sessions will focus on (lymph) angiogenesis, vascular pathologies, vascular cell function, and their progenitors, heterogeneity and clonal expansion, vascular ageing and drug targeting, micro- and macrovascular pathologies in cardiometabolic and neurovascular disease, and treatment thereof. The conference is compliant with MedTech code and will secure Continuing Medical Education accreditation.

Currently all five keynote speakers have accepted to showcase their past and latest work on clinical microvascular function and cardiometabolic diseases (Prof Coen Stehouwer, MUMC Maastricht), mechanobiology and endothelial plasticity (Prof. Christopher Chen,), Leucocyte traffic and vascular interactions (Prof. Christopher Scheierman, LMU, Germany), Vascular heterogeneity (Prof Christer Betsholtz, Karolinska, Sweden), and Clinical imaging of vascular pathology (Prof. Dave Newby, University of Edinburgh, UK).

As mentioned, a young investigator symposium is organized by Prof. Yvonne Alexander (Manchester UK); Dr Reinier Boon (AMC, Amsterdam); Prof. Marion Graupera (IDIBELL, Barcelona), hosting Dr's Baer, de Bock, and Franco, Kaikkonen-Määttä, and Kusumbe. Moreover, we are proud to announce that special lectures are funded by both EVBO and ESM societies: including the EVBO medal lecture for lifetime achievements by Prof Elisabetta Dejana, and the early career EVBO lecture by Dr Rui Benedito. Nominations for the Malpighi lecture by ESM and the Servier award for outstanding publication on microcirculation/vascular biology research in the experimental or the clinical environment are now being reviewed by ESM. We also welcome our colleagues from the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) working group on

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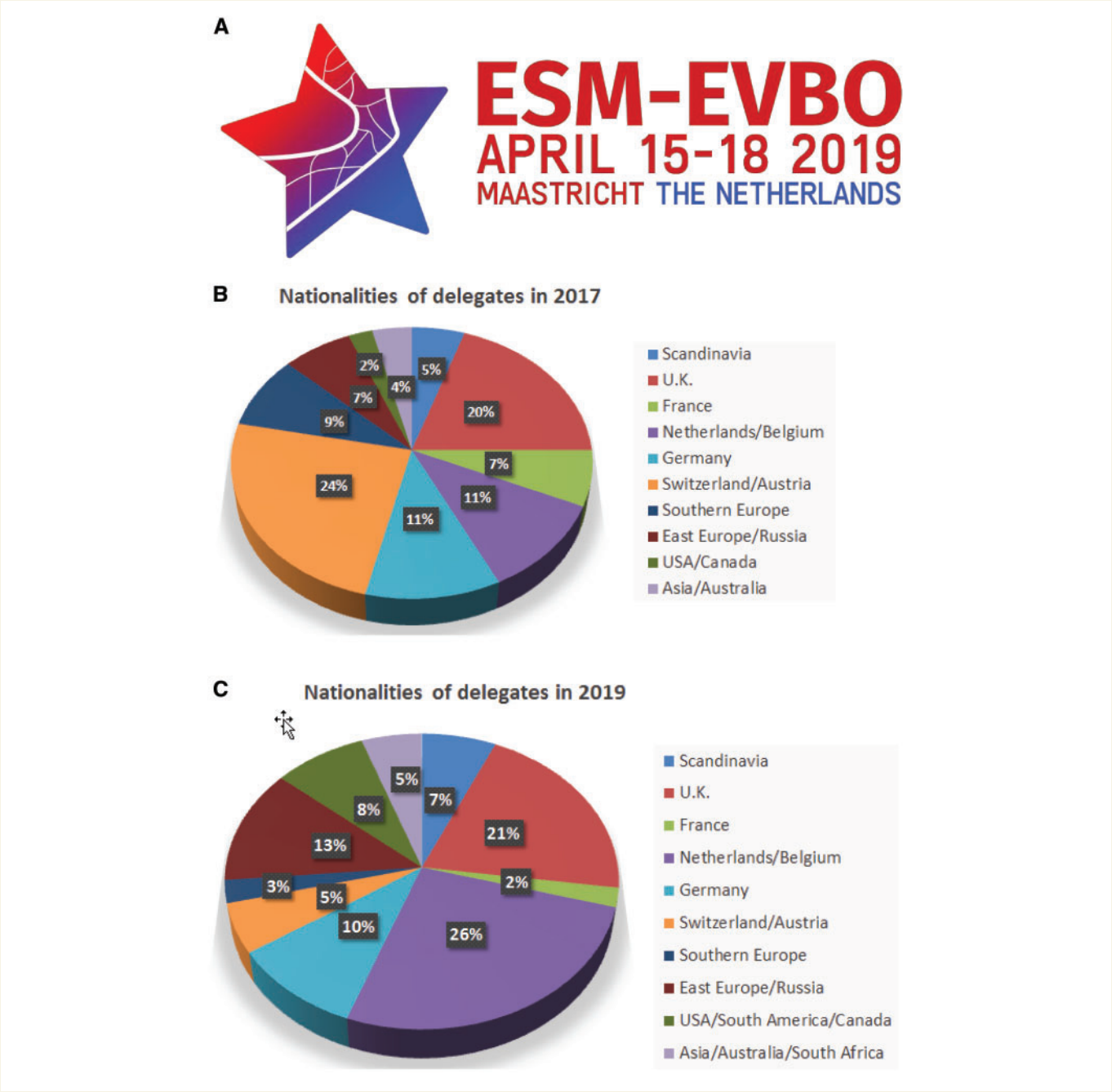


**Figure 1** Logo and international community attending ESM-EVBO. (*A*) Conference logo. (*B*) Country of origin of 2017 delegates (pie chart 2017 delegates). (*C*) Current national distribution of registered 2019 delegates (current as of January 2019).

atherosclerosis and vascular biology, who have organized a symposium on endothelial dysfunction. Finally, a new ESM working group will be launched on Retinal Microvascular Research in human studies by Dr Boy Houben and Prof. Henner Hanssen.

As one of our aims is to stimulate and educate early career scientists (ECS), we composed a special programme for our young delegates, including many workshops (meet the editor of Cardiovascular Research Professor Tomasz Guzik, press communication, impact and valorization, non-invasive, and mass spectrometry imaging), their own social programme and preferred accommodation to stimulate new networks, and we offer in total 19 travel fellowships and eight poster awards.[7] Although we allocated 37 slots (42% of all conference presentations) for oral presentations to have a training platform for ECS, this still only meant a 13% chance to be selected for an oral presentation. To further foster our early career scientists, future organizers could consider pre-conference satellites organized for and by early career scientists to support their development, build networks and, importantly allow an even larger podium for oral presentations.

## Current facts and future meetings

As of February 1st 2019, we received 287 abstracts, surpassing the previous meetings by ~50%. The international scientific committee reviewed

these, and abstract submitters will have been informed by the end of February about acceptance and the type of presentation. Based on current numbers, we anticipate over 400 delegates, and the scientific community scheduled to attend the meeting thus far, again consists of a broad international community from 36 countries (*Figure 1C*). We are welcoming. We sincerely wish to thank our sponsors and partners for making this meeting possible.[8] To remain informed on the programme, news, and to register for our ECS workshops please follow us on social media (@ESMEVBO2019), and check our website regularly (www.ESM-EVBO2019.org).

What does the future hold? At the moment, a venue and organizer for the 2021 meeting has yet to be selected; however, we sincerely hope this tradition of joint meetings will also be continued in the future.

**Conflict of interest:** none declared.

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## Authors

**Biography:** Dr Judith Sluimer (PhD defense 2008) is Associate Professor in Maastricht University Medical Center since 2010. Her research is focused on the pathogenesis of atherosclerosis, specifically: (i) cellular oxygen and lipid metabolism, (ii) angiogenesis, and (iii) autophagy (funded by NWO-VENI/VIDI, Aspasia, Dutch Heart Foundation, CTMM, CARIM, Leducq). She combines experimental *in vivo* and *in vitro* models with studies involving human subjects and tissue samples, including non-invasive imaging of vulnerable plaques. In addition to research and teaching, she is member of the Strategic Board of the cardiovascular research institute Maastricht (CARIM), the Dutch Endothelial cell Biology Society (DEBS), EVBO council member, and Associate Editor of *Cardiovascular Research*. She demonstrated a causal role for plaque hypoxia in atherogenesis, and its application for human plaque imaging. As a post-doc with Prof. Ira Tabas (Columbia University, NYC, USA) in 2008, she furthered her expertise in macrophage biology and autophagy funded by NWO Rubicon, UM Kootstra talent fellowship and the international atherosclerosis society (IAS). Her group benefits from interdisciplinary expertise, a crucial condition for innovative science, through: (i) the Leducq transatlantic network of excellence (3% success rate) and (ii) her honorary scientist position at University of Edinburgh, where she is studying vascular non-coding RNAs with Prof Andrew Baker and has embarked on studying single cell heterogeneity in the vasculature.

**Biography:** Dr Boy (AJHM) Houben is Associate Professor at the Department of Internal Medicine of Maastricht University Medical Center. He received his PhD in 1993 on early microcirculatory changes in patients with Type 1 Diabetes. He has longstanding expertise in human (non-invasive) micro- and macrovascular function tests in combination with (pharmacological) interventions, and in the epidemiological setting (the Maastricht Study). Using this unique approach, his main research interest is on the role of microvascular dysfunction in both the pathogenesis and progression of cardiometabolic diseases. In particular, he focuses on the interplay between microvascular dysfunction and metabolic dysregulation (hyperglycaemia). An additional focus in his present research is the effects of lifestyle modifications to reverse microvascular dysfunction. He is president of the ESM, Chair of the Dutch society for Microcirculation and Vascular Biology (MiVaB), member of several other international scientific societies, and editorial board member of Microcirculation.